

Shabbos: A Taste of the World to Come

BY GOLDIE MARKEL · MAY 8, 2015

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Our Parsha states: “For six days labor may be done and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation, you shall not do any work: it is Shabbat for HaShem”.

The Midrash says, that during the giving of the Torah, G-d said to Israel, “My children! I have a good gift (חֶקֶל בֹּטֵט) that I will give you if you receive my Torah and keep my mitzvot”. They replied: “Master of the universe! What is this good gift you are giving us if we keep Your Torah”? HaShem answered, “It is the World to Come”. They said to Him: “Master of the universe! Show us a sample of it in this world”. HaShem replied, “It is the Shabbat, which is one sixtieth of the World to Come, an era that is entirely Shabbat”.

On Friday night we declare that Shabbat is the purpose of creation, “You sanctified the Seventh Day to Your Name, the purpose of creation of heaven and earth”. How is Shabbat the purpose of creation?

HaShem is the essence and the source of all good. The nature of the good is to bestow goodness; therefore HaShem created the world, so that He can bestow His goodness upon His creatures. We receive this goodness by coming close to HaShem and through the pleasure of knowing Him.

HaShem’s desire is for us to reach the level that Isaiah prophesied about when he said, “Then you will delight in HaShem”. The full pleasure of this is in the World to Come. However Hashem wanted us to have a taste of it, so he gave us the delight of Shabbat; as it is written: “And you shall proclaim the Shabbat a delight”. It is noteworthy that the only place in the entire scriptures that the word delight (גִּיּוּעַ) is used is in relation to Shabbat.

The Torah states: “Six days shall you work and accomplish all your work; but the seventh day is Shabbat to HaShem your G-d; you shall not do any work”. Rashi comments that when Shabbat comes, one should not even think about work. Rather, he should feel as if all his work has been accomplished. This means that the commandment of Shabbat not only involves our deeds, but even our mental attitude and disposition. No matter what is still left to be done, we should feel as much at ease as if everything has already been completed and accomplished. How can we achieve such a state of mind? By realizing that just as the creator provides for all His creatures, surely He provides for those who faithfully follow His will.

This is because a person can never be deprived of what has been set aside for him. However, our efforts, though necessary, do not produce the results. Once we have done our due diligence, we have fulfilled our responsibilities and made a vessel, so to speak, for HaShem's blessings to rest upon us.

Rabbi Ovadia Sforno states that a Jew should strive to keep Shabbat in mind throughout all his dealings during the week, so that when Shabbat arrives, it will be easy for him to divert his attention from the mundane and focus entirely on the sanctity of Shabbat. This is the meaning of the verse, "Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it."

It is a known fact that a person only worries about things he thinks he can change, but not about things which he knows are beyond his control. When a person views the world in this light, his transition into Shabbat and his attitude during Shabbat becomes easy.

The story is told of a Chasid who came to his Rebbe and asked him, "Rebbe, you keep Shabbat and I keep Shabbat. You work during the week and I work during the week. Why then are you the Rebbe and I the Chasid?" The Rebbe answered, "When you do Kiddush on Shabbat you think about work. When I work during the week, I think Kiddush".

Through keeping Shabbat properly, we gradually develop the realization that all the pleasures of the world are like nothing in comparison to the true pleasure of closeness to HaShem. This is why Shabbat is called a good gift. May we all merit to behold the true and complete redemption when we will experience an era which is all Shabbat, speedily in our times. Amen